

Claims:

Applicants are not amending the claims herein; this listing of claims has been provided for convenience. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-147. (Canceled).

148. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting matches to searches initiated by a searcher so long as access control criteria are met, the matches including potential targets satisfying one or more search criteria defined for the searches, and the access control criteria (i) being selectively controllable by any of one or more persons in one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting and including the searcher and the potential targets, and (ii) defining ranked access levels assigned to said one or more persons, said access levels being defined in terms of attributes of relationships that exist between any two persons in each of said chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential target to which each of the matches pertain.

149. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein one attribute includes connection strengths for person-to-person relationships and wherein said search criteria define a minimum connection strength for a person-to-person relationship that is required between persons forming said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

150. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein at least one attribute comprises an indication of a connection strength for at least one of the person-to-person relationships between persons forming said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships.

151. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the search criteria include a connection threshold specified by the searcher, the connection threshold indicating a maximum number of person-to-person relationships to be allowed in establishing said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

152. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the access control criteria comprise a connection threshold indicating a maximum number of person-to-person relationships to be allowed in establishing said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships.

153. (Cancelled)

154. (Cancelled)

155. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the matches are reported only so long as a connection between each person associated with said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets satisfies at least one attribute of the access control criteria established by a next subsequent connector in a connection path between the searcher and the potential target.

156. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein reporting matches to searches initiated by a searcher so long as access control criteria are met further comprises autonomously brokering connections between the searcher and the potential target so as to provide information regarding the one or more persons in the one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

157. (Cancelled)

158. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 156, wherein autonomously brokering connections between the searcher and the potential target further comprises brokering, in accordance with one or more instructions supplied by any one or more connecting individuals in an inter-personal connection path from the searcher to a potential target, where such instructions refer to one or more of said attributes of relationships between any two or more said persons in said chains.

159. (Cancelled)

160. (Cancelled)

161. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein one attribute determines whether a third party evaluation report is accessible to the searcher, said third party evaluation report (i) pertaining to a person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target, and (ii) being integrated with a personal profile of said person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target.

162. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 161, wherein said third party evaluation report is not accessible to said person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target.

163. (Cancelled)

164. (Cancelled)

165. (Cancelled)

166. (Cancelled)

167. (Cancelled)

168. (Cancelled)

169. (Cancelled)

170. (Cancelled)

171. (Cancelled)

172. (Previously Presented) A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting matches to search criteria specified in a search initiated by a searcher so long as a connection strength between each two people forming a person-to-person connection in a chain of person-to-person connections between the searcher and a potential target exceeds a connection strength threshold, said connection strength being an attribute of access control criteria that are selectably controllable by any of one or more persons in said chain of person-to-person connections between the searcher and the potential target.

173. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold is included in the search criteria specified by the searcher.

174. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold is established by the potential target.

175. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold determines the minimum connection strength required between two people forming a person-to-person connection in a chain of person-to-person connections between the searcher and the potential target.

176. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein said relationships include a relationship to a group with which at least one of said persons in one of said chains is associated.

177. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein said access levels are autonomously derived and assigned based on instructions provided by said persons, said instructions referring to combinations of said attributes of relationships.

178. (Original) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein said access levels are autonomously derived and assigned based on data about said attributes of relationships.